

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA CLASS SPECIFICATION

Class Title: Wildlife Investigator

Class Code: 90313

A. Purpose:

Conducts law enforcement investigations involving commercial fish and wildlife businesses that are operating illegally and enforces applicable conservation laws to prevent negative impact on natural resource populations and unfair distribution of fish and wildlife resources.

B. Distinguishing Feature:

Wildlife Investigators provide oversight and technical direction to department law enforcement staff regarding investigations of criminal activities pertaining to illegal commercialization of wildlife.

Wildlife Program Administrators provide technical direction and support to department managers and the public; and administrative and scientific direction to statewide programs in game management, fish management, habitat management, conservation law enforcement, wildlife damage management and wildlife advocacy and diversity.

Game, Fish & Parks Program Specialists administer a program or several small programs by developing and implementing state and department regulations; developing program goals, policies and procedures; supervising staff; preparing and administering budgets; and addressing program issues.

C. Functions:

(These are examples only; any one position may not include all of the listed examples nor do the listed examples include all functions which may be found in positions of this class.)

1. Provides oversight, coordination and technical expertise to overt criminal investigations involving illegal commercialization of wildlife such as over-harvesting, illegal sale or transport in and out of state, and unlawful record keeping by commercial hunting and fishing businesses.
 - a. Initiates, develops and coordinates criminal investigations using appropriate investigative techniques such as managing evidence, interviewing witnesses, interrogating suspects, preparation for trial, testifying in court and preparation of final disposition of cases.
 - b. Makes use of technical equipment such as body wires, video recorders, thermal imagers, night vision optics and GPS tracking devices among others.
 - c. Charts, analyzes and synthesizes information from case files, other law enforcement officers, informants, suspects, witnesses, other agencies and businesses to establish structures of criminal enterprises and their place in the criminal community.
 - d. Initiates prosecutions of violators who transport wildlife in interstate commerce by preparing cases and presenting them to state or federal prosecutors for charges to be filed.
2. Coordinates covert operations to infiltrate and investigate illegal commercialization of wildlife and establish prosecutable cases.
 - a. Establishes covert identities and authorizes the use of equipment and vehicles.
 - b. Provides guidance to local and state law enforcement personnel in takedown operations.
 - c. Performs covert investigations for other states.
 - d. Oversees the activities of Conservation Officers involved in criminal investigations.

- e. Conducts a variety of covert investigations of wildlife crimes which may involve narcotics, organized theft and fraud or corruption.
 - f. Makes independent, urgent, critical investigative decisions without supervisory input.
 - g. Makes prosecutorial recommendations to state and federal attorneys and prepares to explain to grand juries or trial juries the illegal activities of criminal organizations involving numerous suspects in a long-term investigation.
3. Performs administrative duties that benefit the law enforcement program and facilitate operations statewide.
- a. Works closely with other law enforcement staff in the department and may provide professional training, advice and guidance regarding all aspects of investigations.
 - b. Maintains accountability of special funds and keeps required documentation.
 - c. Attends professional investigative training schools and criminal justice seminars.
 - d. Ensures maintenance of security and confidentiality of all reports, files and evidence associated with cases and criminal investigations.
 - e. Organizes and documents cases into appropriate format for presentation to state or federal prosecuting attorneys for charges to be filed.
 - f. Drafts memorandums of understanding (MOU) with participating agencies.
 - g. Maintains contacts with law enforcement agencies in other states in order to acquire identity materials such as driver's licenses, license plates, hunting and fishing licenses, and business information.
 - h. Monitors, analyzes and approves entries made into the department's criminal intelligence database to ensure the integrity of the comprehensive information.
 - i. Provides technical assistance to field officers and administrators regarding operation of the system and entry of data.
 - ii. Analyzes data for trends and patterns in wildlife trade or commerce to assist in apprehending criminals.
 - iii. Communicates to field officers the advantages of the system.
 - i. Maintains proficiency in various areas of equipment in order to acquire what is needed and provide training and technical expertise to field officers.
 - i. Conducts research on federal grant opportunities for equipment.
 - ii. Trains field staff in equipment use.
 - j. Works with other administrative law staff to oversee wildlife law enforcement operations in the state, make recommendations for law and rule changes, develop and maintain a case management system, and otherwise support law enforcement.
4. Conducts background investigations on Conservation Officer Trainee candidates prior to their employment to ensure veracity and completeness of information received from them through application and interview procedures.
- a. Examines applicants' paper work and follows up to confirm accuracy.
 - b. Interviews personal and professional references provided by the applicants, and contacts developed through the course of the investigations.
 - c. Travels to states where applicants have previously worked and lived to validate information and work histories.
 - d. Checks for, and investigates, prior criminal acts.
 - e. Keeps meticulous documentation of investigations.
 - f. Travels to multiple states and deals with various jurisdictions to obtain quality information about applicants.
5. Performs other work as assigned.

D. Reporting Relationships:

Reports to the Wildlife Program Administrator – Law. Does not supervise.

E. Challenges and Problems:

Challenged to organize and manage multiple criminal cases that involve multiple jurisdictions and venues. This is difficult because wildlife violators tend to be mobile which requires frequent involvement with law enforcement agencies in other states; many cases involve transportation of illegally taken game out of the state so incumbents must be familiar with laws and procedures of cooperating agencies; it requires incumbents to travel often to other states or countries to interview witnesses, interrogate suspects or collect evidence; incumbents often work within the parameters of memorandums of understanding so must be familiar with the components of each memorandum with each agency; and it requires maintaining confidentiality throughout all operations. Further challenged to establish and maintain covert investigations. This is difficult in a state with a relatively small population where people know people and the chances of being recognized are higher; because it requires maintaining cover over a period of time and gaining trust; because loss of covert identity may affect the investigator's safety or compromise the investigation and cause loss of dollars; because it requires familiarity with the geographic area in which the investigator is claiming to reside; and because investigators have to maintain their cover among numerous suspects.

Problems encountered include how to handle being recognized while working under cover; working cases that involve other state or department employees, law enforcement officers or persons with political ties; alienating coworkers because of the need for confidentiality; maintaining normal criminal investigations while conducting background investigations on Trainee candidates; coordinating work efforts among several agencies and/or staff; and securing funding for technical equipment.

F. Decision-making Authority:

Decisions include priority of daily work; whether or not to add cases after weighing the threat to natural resources, current case load, and financial restraints; which direction investigations will take and the equipment and tools necessary; whether to involve officers from other states or federal agencies; the level of self-involvement in criminal activities necessary to maintain covert identities; whether intelligence collected on criminal activities meets state and federal guidelines and may be included in the criminal intelligence database; schedules and procedures to achieve assigned background investigations; and recommendations for product purchases and other budget items.

Decisions referred include approval of budget requests, recommendations for legislation, changes to policies or procedures; resolution of issues with other personnel; and final hiring decisions on Conservation Officer Trainees.

G. Contact with Others:

Daily contact with Conservation Officers to foster communication and accomplish work goals; and with federal wildlife law enforcement personnel to facilitate communication between state and federal agencies; weekly contact with division managers to exchange information about work goals and specific information such as administrative rules procedures and commission proposals and finalizations; and with regional law enforcement administrators to communicate about work goals and work accomplished, seek approval to work with a Conservation Officer, or to discuss a Conservation Officer's work performance; and with state, county and local law enforcement officers to gather information and intelligence on subjects under investigation; and monthly contact with licensing personnel to retrieve license information to identify suspects.

H. Working Conditions:

Works in a typical office environment and in the field. Duties sometimes require long hours of travel in all weather conditions, working long and irregular hours, working alone without immediate security backup, deploying technical equipment in any weather conditions and under the stress of detection, and carrying heavy loads of equipment long distances over various terrain in the dark.

I. Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

Knowledge of:

- current case law on search, seizure and arrest, rules of evidence, interviews, interrogations, handling intelligence;
- federal and state wildlife laws and rules;
- crime detection and apprehension of criminals;
- officer safety and survivor skills;
- defensive tactics and the use of force;
- computer equipment and programs;
- technical investigative equipment.

Ability to:

- establish and maintain close working relationships with department law enforcement staff, federal wildlife agents, states attorneys, local law enforcement agencies, etc.;
- maintain appropriate levels of security and confidentiality when maintaining reports, files and evidence;
- communicate information clearly and concisely, both orally and in writing;
- make immediate, legally correct decisions in the presence of criminals while working under cover;
- infiltrate criminal situations and gain the confidence of individuals who are involved in criminal activities;
- establish and maintain a network of informants;
- think critically and make split-second decisions that may affect a covert investigation and the safety of each officer involved;
- establish and maintain proficiency in the use of firearms.